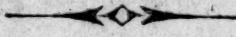


ON THE
INSTITUTION
OF
WORKING-SCHOOLS
FOR
POOR GIRLS,
AND OF
SUNDAY SCHOOLS
FOR
POOR BOYS AND GIRLS,
IN
CHESTER.


Dublin.

Printed at the desire of the Society for Promoting
the Comforts of the Poor,

BY W. WATSON AND SON, 7, CAPEL-STREET.


1800.

Price Two Pence.



ON THE
INSTITUTION
OF
WORKING SCHOOLS FOR
POOR GIRLS,
AND OF
SUNDAY SCHOOLS FOR
POOR BOYS AND GIRLS,
IN CHESTER.

IT may be useful and satisfactory to explain to the subscribers of the charity schools, and the public, the motive, plan, and progress of these establishments.

Among the higher and middle ranks of our citizens, the female principles and behaviour are in a high degree virtuous and irreproachable. They probably were never more excellent at any time or place. The conduct of the women of the lowest class is a wretched contrast to this character. So striking a difference appears to proceed chiefly, if not

entirely, from their different mode of education. The former are early instructed in religious and moral principles, in useful skill, and industrious habits: The latter are brought up in utter ignorance and idleness. It had been observed, by those who visit the habitations of the poor, that their children, even their daughters, were destitute, to a very astonishing degree, of every useful employment. On this consideration, a working-school, for poor girls, was lately established in St. John's parish, where the suspicion of their ignorance was fully proved by facts. Though the girls sent to this school were from nine to thirteen years of age, yet so large a proportion of them as *three fourths* could not sew at all, and not one of the best could sew so well as to make a single article of dress. They were equally ignorant of knitting and spinning. Being thus wretchedly unskilful in the common and most useful arts of life, they are plainly disqualified for domestic servants, and for most other offices in society, and have few means in their power to earn an honest maintenance. Some people strangely doubt the propriety and utility of teaching the poor to read, but all must allow the advantages, and even the urgent necessity of instructing them to work.

At the general enumeration of the inhabitants, there were 4486 children, of both sexes, under 15 years old, in the nine parishes of the city of Chester, of whom 970 were in St. John's Parish; that is, between one-fourth and one-fifth of the whole. We found, upon trial, that one day-school of forty was fully sufficient to teach all the *poor* girls in St. John's Parish, who were of a proper age for instruction, and unemployed. From these facts, it appeared, that four schools, consisting of 40 girls each, to be taught for four years, would nearly comprehend all the poor objects who would require charitable assistance for their education. It was proposed that the girls should change their school every



every year; besides being taught to read at all the schools, and brought to church twice every Sunday, it was intended that they should learn in the first to knit, in the second to spin, in the third to sew, and in the fourth to wash and get up linen. The schools were to be situated, as nearly as may be, within a quarter of a mile of the centre of the city, that the scholars might, without inconvenience, go, each year, to a different school: By this arrangement each girl might have the benefit of the best instruction, being taught, by each mistress, the art in which she is most skilful, as the best knitter, spinner, sewer, and washer. The proper age for such instruction would be, previous to their going out to service, as from nine to thirteen, or rather older. On this plan, 160 would be educated. If to these be added the eight poor girls already fed, clothed, and instructed, by a separate and established charity, the total number being 168, there would be 42, whose education might be annually completed, which are exactly one third of the whole; for it appears from Dr. Price's observations (vol. 2. p. 111.) that there are 126 girls, nine years of age, in Chester. The number of those of ten, eleven, and twelve, does not materially differ, making in the whole 504; and as more than two thirds of the whole number of children are the offspring of persons whose property renders them not objects of charity, reducing them to 168, as mentioned above, four such schools are therefore sufficient for the whole population of this city.

Such was the original intention, and it is likely to be accomplished with a degree of success which must be extremely pleasing to the subscribers, and to all the friends of humanity. The knitting, spinning, and sewing schools, of forty girls each, have been very regularly attended. By their industry and skill each scholar daily earns something, and by their own work many will be enabled to

clothe themselves ; their fellow-citizens will soon see the most meritorious dressed in the same uniform, the industry of their own hands. This is a present benefit to the poor children, and affords a pleasing prospect of advantages to every future day of their lives. No difficulty has occurred in supplying work for the knitters and spinners ; but employment for the sewers has been much more difficult to obtain : And, on this occasion, we solicit all well-wishers to the institution to supply the sewing-school with plain work, both coarse and fine, as the different scholars have acquired various degrees of proficiency in sewing : whatever is intrusted to their care will be executed neatly, and on moderate terms. Indeed this defect has lately been, in some degree, supplied by the lady-visitors, whose kindness, care, and beneficence to the poor girls, whom they superintend, ought to be acknowledged in terms of the warmest gratitude. Their humanity being touched by the ragged objects thus collected from the most indigent of their fellow-citizens, out of their own private and separate bounty, they have, with compassionate generosity, clothed great numbers of these half-naked girls, with gowns, petticoats, as well as every other article of dress ; and all, except shoes and stockings, were made at the sewing-school. To a few of the most destitute they have allowed a weekly pension to relieve the hungry with food. They watch, with earnest solicitude, all their improvements in reading, working, and behaviour. We have thus the fairest hopes to behold the young generation growing up in habits and skill to obtain an honest and comfortable maintenance, and training up in the best principles of morality and religion. Our aim is, to fit them for their humble station, to be happy in themselves, and useful to the community, as good servants, wives, and mothers. However, we cannot reasonably hope to work a perfect reformation of manners in the present scholars. The pernicious

example.

example of their own family and neighbours will, undoubtedly, in some degree, countervail our instructions. When the present scholars become mothers, we may expect much greater improvement in their children, as a domestic pattern will add great influence to the benefit of a good education. In this view, we may fairly expect a gradual improvement in future generations.

Some difficulty has arisen in supplying the sewers with work, and still greater may occur in obtaining employment for a school to wash and get up linen: this part of the plan has not hitherto been attempted; it will remain for the future consideration of the society whether such a school can be established, or whether three years' education in three schools will be deemed sufficient. On either plan, the proposed number of 42 girls will annually receive their education.

As our Sunday-schools are conducted on the same plan as in other places, they require no particular explanation. All the poor children who offer are received: And all well-wishers to the improvement and reformation of the poor are requested to inquire among their neighbours and dependents, whether there are any so ignorant and abandoned as to neglect the offered kindness. The most deserving girls among the Sunday-schools are regularly elected into the working-schools. Though the boys have not so regular a succession into their day-school, yet as every resident subscriber to the latter is also a subscriber to the former school, and equally interested in the success of both institutions, for the education of poor children, they who have attended the Sunday-schools with the greatest regularity, have easily obtained an appointment to the day-schools, when they arrive at a proper age. After these boys have been instructed for two years in their day-school, the most meritorious, comprehending about one-half of the day-scholars, are elected into the Blue-coat Hospital, where they
not

not only receive instruction, but food, clothes, and complete maintenance, for two years, and, on compliance with the rules of the charity, an apprenticeship fee, when their education is finished. This election, according to merit, has an excellent effect, in exciting their emulation, and in securing their obedience. As all the resident subscribers to the blue-school for girls are also supporters, and many of them zealous supporters, of the Sunday and working-schools, it is highly probable, that when no orphan, or other object of peculiar distress, solicits their compassion, they will often select, for one year, the most necessitous and best-behaved girls, who have attended the working-schools for two or three years. This charitable institution is judiciously conducted, and bestows food, clothes, lodging, and complete maintenance, as well as the most useful instruction: the hopes of meriting such a reward would have a very extensive and beneficial influence over both the children and their parents.

No person subscribes more than *a crown*, a sum which may be well afforded by every family in easy circumstances. In others of more opulence, several individuals of the same family are subscribers. Besides about 450 crown subscriptions, there have been many very generous benefactions, which, at the commencement of the institution, were peculiarly seasonable to supply the expence of books, wheels, forms, &c.

Our late excellent prelate, the present Bish. of London, not only gave his sanction to the original proposal, by preaching a sermon, with persuasive energy and fervent piety, to recommend the plan, which, from its novelty, might expect to encounter various objections; but so heartily did he approve the establishment, as generously to bestow the profits of its publication, with another benefaction, upon this charity.

Thus,

Thus, at the various charity schools, now fairly established, all the poor boys and girls in Chester are invited to receive an excellent education. The Sunday-schools gladly admit all who ask for instruction. From this general source, the working-schools for girls and the day-schools for boys are supplied. These children, in suecession, according to their wants and their merits, are promoted into the blue-schools for boys, and, probably, for girls, where they are completely maintained, as well as instructed. No proper objects want a friend, unless their parents are guilty of the most blameable negligence; indeed the most abandoned wish instructions for their offspring. From these institutions, we may reasonably hope to behold the rising generation daily improve in skill, industry, honesty, fidelity, and the various virtues which generally result from a good education.

NUMBER OF THE SCHOLARS.

The blue-boys	- - -	30
The blue-girls	- - -	8
The day-school of boys	-	120
The working-school of girls	-	120
The Sunday-schools are fluctuating, but sometimes contain	} -	550
Total		828

GENERAL RULES

Respecting the Sunday and Working-Schools, established by charitable contributions in the City of Chester, on the 25th day of March, 1787.

I. The chief management and direction of all these schools shall be vested in a committee of twenty persons, nine of whom shall be the resident officiating clergy of the nine parishes within the city of Chester, of the treasurer and secretary, and of
nine

nine other persons, who shall be chosen by ballot from the whole number of subscribers, by the majority of them, who shall be present at a general meeting, which shall be held on the last Thursday in April, in every year.

II. The Committee shall meet on the first Wednesday in every month, at twelve o'clock, at the Blue-coat Hospital, in Chester, and three of them (if more shall not attend) shall be a sufficient number to proceed to the business of these institutions.

III. The Sunday-schools are to instruct the children in reading, and in the first principles of the Christian religion; and the working-schools are farther to instruct the girls in sewing plain work, knitting, spinning, washing, and getting up linen.

IV. No children shall be admitted into the Sunday-schools under the age of six years; nor any girls into the working-schools under the age of nine years, at the least. And, as vacancies shall happen in the working-schools, those girls who shall appear to the committee to be most deserving among the Sunday scholars, and who have attended the most regularly, shall have the preference to supply them.

V. The children admitted into all the schools shall constantly attend the public worship of the established church, every Sabbath day, according to the directions of those persons who shall be appointed visitors of these respective schools.

VI. A visitor for each parish, or for such parishes wherein there is a Sunday-school, shall be chosen quarterly out of the committee present at the monthly meetings, and three other persons shall be chosen visitors, in the like manner and at the same time.

VII. The four ladies, managers of the Blue-coat Girls' School, together with eight other ladies, subscribers, to be named the first year by the committee,

tee, and afterwards by the visitors of the preceding year, the first Wednesday in May, shall be requested to act as visitors or managers of the working-schools.

VIII. The visitors shall provide proper books, and other necessaries for the use of the scholars, and shall have power to remove any teacher, and to expel any scholar, for the want of proper qualification, for disobedience, or for any gross act of misbehaviour; but the teacher so removed, and the parents of the child or children so expelled, may appeal to the committee at any monthly meeting, when, upon proof of such disqualification being removed, or of such disobedience, or other misbehaviour duly repented of, the committee may, if they shall think fit, recommend them to be again taken into the school.

IX. The visitors shall enter minutes of their proceeding, in books to be provided for that purpose, which shall be laid before the committee at each monthly meeting.

X. After three years from the commencement of the school, namely, in March, 1790, all the working scholars shall be admitted for the first year into the knitting, for the second into the spinning, and for the third into the sewing school. And as vacancies shall happen, during the year, they shall be supplied in like manner from the schools in the above order, according to the priority of the admission of such scholars, of which an exact register shall be kept. The lady visitors shall direct, in the mean time, what proportion of the scholars shall be removed to each school.

XI. A register of the work done by the girls shall be kept and shewn to the committee at each meeting; the profit of their work shall be divided equally between the mistress and the girl who earns it; the girl's share to be laid out in stuff, check, &c.

&c. for gowns, aprons, &c. for her own use, of a peculiar kind and colour, so as to make their merit generally conspicuous; and each girl in the working schools shall have a green bonnet given her annually, distinguishing each school by a different coloured ribband.

XII. Each Sunday and working-school shall contain forty scholars.

XIII. The girls shall go to the working-schools at seven o'clock in the morning from Lady-day to Michaelmas, and at eight o'clock from Michaelmas to Lady-day, and continue in the school till twelve o'clock, and go again at one o'clock in the afternoon, and continue till six o'clock in the summer, and till four o'clock in the winter; they shall be allowed eight holidays at Christmas, and every Saturday afternoon, and at no other time, without the special leave of a visitor.

XIV. The children of the Sunday-schools shall attend at nine o'clock in the morning, and again at one in the afternoon, and continue till the time of divine service, and be taught for two hours immediately after divine service in the afternoon.

XV. The names of the scholars in all the schools shall be written in a book, and called over each morning and evening, by the teachers, who shall mark the absentees; which book shall be shewn to the visitors, who shall enquire into the cause of such absence, and shall reprove or even expel such scholar, as the case may seem to require.

XVI. The teachers of all the schools shall begin and finish the duties of the day with a suitable prayer to be fixed upon by the visitors, in which the children shall join, as they shall be directed, in a decent and devout manner.

FINIS.

